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## Donovan Seeks Captives' Release

## Gone to Cuba—Freedom His Mission

By William G. Wing  
James B. Donovan, the attorney who effected the swap of Rudolf Abel for Francis G. Powers, left the city yesterday for Cuba where he will try to make a deal for the freedom of 1,113 prisoners.

After announcing he was going, Mr. Donovan slipped away from the city in the afternoon. All details of his mission, including the time and place of his arrival and the identity of the Cubans he will deal with, were secret.

He will negotiate for the freedom of the remainder of the 1,179 captured in the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion in April, 1961. Since capture, the men's freedom has been offered by Cuban Premier Fidel Castro as bait for some kind of deal with the United States.

So far, 60 of the prisoners have been released to come to this country for medical treatment. They were released "on credit"—that is, with the expectation that their fines of about \$2.5 million will eventually be paid. Another six men were freed after their families paid ransom for them.

But no way has been found

to free the remaining 1,113. The original deal to trade the men for prisoners fell through when Cuban agents asked the Cuban government to set a price of \$62 million, including the price for 1,000 wounded and sick men, which private sources have not been able to raise.

Yesterday, Mr. Donovan expressed confidence in the success of his mission but offered no clue on how he found a way to get the men.

He emphasized that he is going as representative of a private group of relatives of the prisoners, called the Cuban Families Committee for Liberation of Prisoners of War. He reiterated that his mission is humanitarian and non-political.

But he offered no explanation of why both governments agreed to his journey at a time when Cuban-American relations have been freshly irritated by the shelling of a Havana suburb by a group of Cuban student exiles.

What Mr. Donovan did offer was the following statement, which he read at a press conference in his office at 161 William St.:

"The mission to Cuba for release of the 1,113 men still in



Herald Tribune—UPI

Attorney James B. Donovan, who left on a mission to Cuba yesterday.

prison for participating in the Cuban invasion leaves today for Havana.

"Permission for the trip has been granted by the governments of the United States and Cuba. The time and place of

his departure from the United States will not be disclosed.

"I shall be accompanied by Alvarez Sanchez Jr., president of the Cuban Families Committee, and Dr. Ernesto Freyre, secretary of the committee. Both have sons who were in the invasion and now are in Havana prisons.

"All the people of the United States owe a deep moral obligation to these prisoners. The 1,113 include Catholics, Protestants and Jews; they are white and Negro; they are professional men and trade unionists; they are a cross-section of Cuba and humanity.

"My mission is humanitarian and we are confident of its success. All we ask is your prayers.

Then, in answer to questions, Mr. Donovan said he had an invitation from the Cuban government last week. His visa was arranged through the Czech Embassy.

Mr. Donovan called on Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy in Washington last Thursday to discuss the Cuban prisoners' situation. Yesterday Mr. Donovan was careful to separate his activities from any connection with official American policy. Pressed, he said: "This is a private undertaking on a humanitarian basis. However, the United States government has declared its sympathy with the purpose of the committee."

And then he said he wanted to emphasize that "what is sought is something that should serve to bring together closer the Cuban and American peoples and compare with their governments. The mission is humanitarian and non-political."

He said the shelling incident had aggravated the situation and added tensions but did not jeopardized the chances of success. He said his invitation had come from the highest level of the Cuban government, and that the Cubans with whom he had dealt had been proper and correct in their relations with him. He declined to speak of payment for the prisoners as ransom, but said it should be considered a gift from the

American people to the Cuban government. He said he would not exclude the possibility of paying for the prisoners with food or supplies rather than cash.

At the White House, a spokesman for the Food for Peace program said no gifts of food for Cuba could be considered until a formal request had been received from the Cuban government. "If such a request were made," he said, "I'm sure the government would consider it seriously."

It was noted that a complicating factor at the moment is that, although the Cubans are said to be desperately short of food, the Cuban government is exporting food to other Latin American countries for propaganda purposes.

Mr. Donovan's appeal for prayers yesterday was quickly seconded by leading clergymen associated with the Families Committee. Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston; Episcopal Bishop James A. Pike, of California; Dr. Louis Kinkelstein, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and Roman Catholic Bishop Edward E. Swannstrom joined in asking for prayers. Relatives of the prisoners were reported flocking to churches in Miami.

After Mr. Donovan's departure, it was announced that Robert A. Morse, an attorney of 16 Court St., Brooklyn, will act as the committee's counsel during Mr. Donovan's absence. Mr. Morse is the Board of Education's special counsel for investigation. Both Mr. Donovan and Mr. Morse are serving without pay.

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